

Woman Who Started Blaze That Killed Firefighters Sentenced to 30 Years In Prison

Guilty plea to murder in Dover killing; Change in state's securities act leads to guilty plea to theft and identity theft

Beatriz Fana-Ruiz, the woman who set fire to the home where she lived leading to the deaths of 3 Wilmington firefighters has been sentenced to 30 years in prison. Deputy Attorneys General Barzilai Axelrod and John Downs secured the sentence for Fana-Ruiz, 30 years old. In September 2016, Fana-Ruiz, angry about her living situation and unhappy with her life, set a fire in the basement of the home where she was staying in the 1900 block of Lakeview Road in the Canby Park section of Wilmington. The fire quickly spread into the ceiling and weakened the floor joists. Lt. Christopher Leach, Senior Firefighter Ardythe Hope died as a result of injuries they sustained when the first floor collapsed causing them to fall into the burning basement. Firefighter Brad Speakman was also seriously injured when he also fell into the basement. Senior/Firefighter Jerry Fickes was killed as he tried to pull Lt. Leach from the fire and another portion of the ceiling collapsed onto him. In August 2019, Fana-Ruiz pleaded guilty to Murder Second Degree, Arson First Degree, and Assault First Degree. A Superior Court Judge sentenced Fana-Ruiz to 30 years in prison, followed by 2 ½ years probation. Additionally, the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has filed a detainer against Fana-Ruiz, seeking her deportation to her home country of the Dominican Republic when released from custody in Delaware. Special Agent Lisa Herb, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) provided essential investigative and expert analysis in determining the cause and origin of the fire and in interviewing Fana-Ruiz and obtaining

her confession. Det. Joe Bucksner of the Wilmington Police Department was the lead investigator for the murder component of the case. DOJ paralegal Jaime Prater assisted with the prosecution, and social workers Kristin Fluharty-Emory, Donna Lindsay and Jenn Kutney worked with the victims and victim's families to provide counsel and guidance through this case that lasted over 3 years.

Attorney General Kathleen Jennings made the following comment on the sentence for Fana-Ruiz: "This horrific tragedy reminds us of the danger Delaware's first responders knowingly and willingly put themselves in every day to protect us. I thank our prosecution team and those who investigated the case, but most importantly I continue to extend my and DOJ's sympathies to the families and friends of the firefighters who were killed and injured, as well as to the still grieving Wilmington Fire Department."

A 20-year-old Camden man was sentenced to 15 years in prison after pleading guilty for his role in a Dover murder. In May 2018, Eugene Riley, along with another man, Ahmir Bailey, 21, of Lincoln, began arguing with 20-year-old Jameir Vann-Robinson, of Smyrna, as Vann-Robinson and a friend left a house party on Mitscher Road. The argument led to Riley and Bailey both firing several shots at Vann-Robinson, with Bailey fatally striking him in the back. Riley pleaded guilty to Murder Second Degree and was immediately sentenced by a Superior Court judge to 15 years in prison, followed by work release and probation. Bailey was convicted by a jury in October of 2018 of Murder First Degree, Attempted Murder First Degree, Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Felony, Shoplifting, and Conspiracy Third Degree. A Superior Court judge also found Bailey guilty of Possession of a Firearm by a Person Prohibited and Possession of Ammunition by a Person Prohibited. Bailey faces mandatory life in prison when sentenced in January of next year. Deputy Attorneys General Greg Babowal and Kevin Smith prosecuted the case. The

investigation was led by Detective Schmid of the Dover Police Department.

Thanks to a change in the Delaware Securities Act designed to protect the state's vulnerable populations, a Newark woman was prosecuted for stealing from her mother. For a period of a year and a half beginning in July 2017, Karen Warrington, 50, impersonated her mother and stole money from her mother's investment accounts. Warrington pleaded guilty to Theft of \$50,000 or More and 1 count of Identity Theft. Deputy Attorney General William Green prosecuted the case with assistance from special investigator Craig Weldon. Detective Christopher Rau of the New Castle Police Department was the chief investigating officer. This plea agreement is the first to result from a Report of Suspected Exploitation of a Senior or Vulnerable Adult submitted to the Department of Justice Investor Protection Unit by a financial institution pursuant to Section 73-307 of the Delaware Securities Act, which was amended in 2018 to make such reporting mandatory. A Superior Court judge will sentence Warrington in March 2020.